(b) if so, what are the causes of these sudden deaths;

(c) how many Asiatic lions are at present there in the Sanctuary in Girnar district; and

(d) whether wild-life like lions are adequately protected there?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) As per the information received from the State Government of Gujarat, twelve Asiatic Lions have died since August this year, of which ten died due to natural causes, while 2 died of poisoning by local people.

(c) There is no district named Girnar. Gir Sanctuary and National Park is located in Junagadh and Amreli districts. Asiatic Lion are found in the sanctuary and its adjoining areas in Junagadh, Amreli and Bhavnagar districts. As per population estimates conducted during April, 2005, there are 359+10 Asiatic Lions in the area.

(d) Asiatic Lions in Gir and adjoining area are adequately protected through patrolling by local staff supported by wireless network, mobile squads, checking nakas, awareness education, eco-development programmes and provision of compensation for loss of cattle and injury or death of human being.

Construction of Vasant Kunj Mall

347. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI HARISH RAWAT:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) is constructing Vasant Kunj Mall illegally on ridge land and water catchments area where no construction or ground water withdrawal is allowed/ permissible;

(b) if so, the action taken/proposed to be taken against DDA for damaging ridge/water catchments area and to stop the construction of Mall; and

(c) what is the policy of Government to remove illegal encroachments/ constructions from green areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) Delhi Development Authority has reported that the construction of Vasant Kunj Shopping Mall is as per the prescribed land use and the auction purchasers are required to obtain necessary clearances from Statutory Authorities before execution of the project.

(c) As and when an encroachment is noticed, the concerned authorities are required to take action in accordance with the provisions of law.

Illegal trading of elephants from Assam

348. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of illegal trading of elephants from Assam;

(b) if so, the steps Government are taking to stop such illegal activity in Assam;

(c) whether it is a fact that some forest officers are also involved in this; and

(d) if so, the justification for it?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) As per the information received from the State Government of Assam, there are no reports of illegal trade of elephants from Assam.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Shrinking of forest cover

349. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to the latest forest survey, the dense forest cover of the country shrunk by 26,245 sq. km. between 2001 and 2003;

(b) if so, whether efforts of afforestation proved to be futile since forest cover has come down drastically in these two years; and